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Detainees have all left NCC grounds

JEFF REINITZ, Courier Staff Writer

WATERLOO -- The last detainee to be processed on criminal charges in the Agriprocessors raid was examined by paramedics minutes after leaving the Electric Park courtroom Thursday.

Svitlana Yudina, a Ukrainian who was held to the end so court officials could find a Russian language translator, told Magistrate Jon Scoles she wasn't feeling well as her hearing ended.

"I have some pain in my chest area," she told Magistrate Jon Scoles through an interpreter.

Scoles asked that she be examined at the National Cattle Congress grounds going to the Hardin County Jail in Eldora.

A short time later, a Waterloo Fire Rescue ambulance was sent to the NCC campus. Yudina, who is charged with identity theft and false employment documents, declined a ride to the hospital and was treated by medical staff at the NCC detention center.

Yudina's hearing ended shortly before noon and capped an around-the-clock, through-the-night effort to move 306 detainees who were charged with crimes through the court and out of the NCC detention area.

"That was only temporary housing for the intake process. Now that that is completed, people will be detained in the manner we typically detain people in our custody," said Tim Counts, a spokesman for Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The defendants and others detainees who weren't charged with crimes but are being held for noncriminal immigration proceedings were transferred to a number of county jails in Iowa and one state prison pending further court dates.

Criminal courtrooms will remain open in the Electric Park Ballroom area for status hearings and possible pleas, said Clerk of Court Robert Phelps.

Those hearings are scheduled to begin at 8 a.m. Monday.

"This has been an unprecedented undertaking in nearly all respects," U.S. Attorney Matt Dummermuth said, noting federal agents, law officers and his staff "have worked literally around the clock" to process the cases. "To have this completed in three days is phenomenal."

ICE agent Claude Arnold said, "We worked closely with the U.S. Attorney's Office and with attorneys representing the detainees to ensure detainees rights were fully protected."

ICE will continue to operate part of the housing unit at NCC as a holding area for defendants returning from jails for court hearings, Counts said.

The Electric Park Ballroom courts will be used for criminal charges and not immigration matters.

Counts wasn't able to say when ICE officials would be leaving the NCC grounds; their lease extends through may 25. He did say the processing areas have been dismantled.

"Because the intake process is winding down, we have started to take down those tables and disconnect those computers," Counts said.

Still, officials with the U.S. Attorney's office in Cedar Rapids said the investigation is ongoing. They indicated temporary court facilities in Electric Park may still be utilized for status hearings for detainees.

Sick child

Yudina towered over the line of shorter Guatemalan detainees when they entered the courtroom.

Shortly after she and the others put on the wireless headphones that translated the proceedings into Spanish, it became apparent Yudina needed further assistance.

She was taken out of the group until officials found a certified Russian interpreter who translated over the phone from Chicago.

Yudina said she was extremely upset and that her daughter, who currently lives in Ukraine, was "very serious ill."

"She lost every hair on her head" and is so weak she can't walk, Yudina said.

She said she doesn't know what is wrong with her daughter, who was taken to hospitals in Kiev and Moscow.

The child needs a special surgery or she will die, she said.

Jail and prison

Jails that are housing detainees and defendants held following the raid are in Linn, Hardin, Fayette, Bremer, Benton, Hamilton, Cerro Gordo, Polk, Boone, Dubuque and Story counties, according to U.S. District Court files.

Some are also being held at the Newton Correctional Facility, which is a state medium security prison

The Iowa Department of Corrections, which runs the prison, has had an ongoing contract with ICE for a number of years to house immigration detainees at a unit in Newton, said Fred Scaletta, DOC spokesman.

"This is nothing new," he said.

The unit can hold 80 people, he said.

ICE officials called the DOC Tuesday asking about available capacity, and the unit had 51 beds available, he said.

The federal government pays the Department of Corrections \$69.84 per ICE detainee per day.